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ABSTRACT

An intensive case study in learning a second foreign language, which is part of an applied linguistics course for teachers/teacher trainees offered at the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa) is described. Attention is directed to: case study rationale and objectives; student orientation and preparation; and areas of focus and the courses offered, including content, administration, and methodology. Additionally, student reactions to the case study are discussed. One of the major aims of the case study is to enable students to see how the various theoretical aspects of the course become integrated in their application to the language learning process. The case study is compulsory and has the following objectives: to enable students to rediscover what it is like to be a learner in a classroom situation; to promote understanding of the linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural processes at work in language learning; and to help students gain insights into their own learning and communication strategies. The languages offered in the 1980 case study were Zulu and French. Students were required to write a psychologically-oriented report on their observations of the learning process. Among the content areas of the case study are interest, perception and information processing, attention, learning strategies, syntax, semantics, phonology, home and school backgrounds, and pedagogical concerns (e.g., transfer of training). (SW)

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CASE STUDY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR TEACHER TRAINEES

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A B S T R A C T

An intensive case study in learning a second/foreign language has recently been included in an applied linguistics honours course for in-service teachers and teacher trainees at the University of the Witwatersrand. One of its major aims is to enable students to see how the various theoretical aspects of the course become integrated in their application to the language learning process as a total experience. The languages offered in the 1980 case study were Zulu and French, students being required to write a psychologically-oriented report on their observations of the learning process. Focus is on the following areas of investigation : linguistic, psychological, sociocultural and pedagogic. This paper is in three parts and includes a description of the objectives of the exercise, student orientation and preparation, a detailed coverage of the main areas of focus and the courses offered, including content, administration and methodology. In conclusion, student reactions to the case study are discussed and recommendations made for future courses.

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PART A - RATIONALE

How many language teachers remember what it was like to learn a foreign/second language and are aware of the processes involved in the language learning/teaching (LL/LT) situation? These questions should be of fundamental concern to us in our endeavours to guide our students towards successful achievement in the target language (TL). In an attempt to confront the issues raised by the above question, an intensive case study in learning a foreign/second non-cognate language has recently been included in an applied linguistics (Honours) course at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

One of the major aims of the case study is to enable students to see how the various theoretical aspects of the applied linguistics course become integrated in their application to the language learning process. For this reason, it is introduced quite late in the course (second semester), after the main theoretical components have been covered. During the language course, students are urged to note down their observations in precise terms, according to a frame of reference, which then form the basis of a fairly comprehensive report on the learning experience. The model for this case study is that which is offered as part of the MA in applied linguistics at the University of Essex, for which Russian or Portuguese can be chosen.

1. OBJECTIVES

The case study is compulsory and has the following objectives:-

- to enable students to rediscover what it is like to be a learner in a classroom situation (methodological aspect)
- to enable students to gain insights into the linguistic, psychological, sociocultural processes at work in language learning
- to enable students to gain insights into their OWN learning and communication strategies

Emphasis is thus placed on creating awareness of what is involved in the language learning/teaching process and the students' reactions to it.

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2. PREPARATION

An orientation session precedes the course which takes the form of a briefing in which students are asked to consider aspects which they expect to find most interesting from the psychological point of view, (attention, motivation, group interaction, etc.) and to list these factors in order of importance for them. They are then asked to subdivide their top priority into further factors. For example, under "motivation", they might wish to consider their own previous language learning history, their attitude to their aptitude, to the language and its speakers, to their teacher and peers. They are then required to consider their criteria for observing and recording these factors. They are also warned that they can expect to revise their framework equally thoroughly once the language learning process is underway.

3. THE REPORT

The report may be primarily linguistic or primarily methodological in content, but it is suggested that the most appropriate orientation be a psychological one. Students may limit themselves to a detailed treatment of ONE aspect (e.g. focussing on the linguistic system, they may wish to discuss the strategies they used in order to assimilate it), or they may deal with several variables together and their interaction (e.g. the relationship between aptitude, attitude, motivation and imposed learning strategies.) However, in order to fully appreciate the potential range of information a case study could provide, it is necessary to consider in more detail the various aspects involved in the LL process as these will eventually provide the framework for analysis. This will be done under (5) below.

4. ASSESSMENT

The case study exercise is not primarily a test of achievement in learning the language. For this reason, assessment is based on the quality

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of the report on the learning process. Aptitude was tested in advance (M.L.A.T.) and the results made known to the students, both to help them with diagnosis of possible strengths and weaknesses and to enable them to decide whether it really was a valid indicator of success (many students found that is was not).

5. AREAS OF INVESTIGATION

For ease of reference, four main areas of investigation are specified. These are (1) psychological (2) linguistic (3) sociocultural (4) pedagogical. As these areas are interrelated there will obviously be some overlap. In the ensuing discussion, the author has drawn upon her own experience of learning Russian in a case study situation at the University of Essex, England, in order to clarify and illustrate points made.

5.1. PSYCHOLOGICAL

This includes the following variables:-

(a) Interest, Attitudes and Motivation

This, of course, overlaps to some extent with the sociocultural aspect. It concerns the nature of interest in terms of the language learning exercise i.e. whether it is intrinsic or "imposed". The learner may be primarily interested in the process as an intellectual exercise, or be genuinely interested in the language itself for the purpose of communicating with native speakers, and/or for gaining insights into the nature of the language in order to better understand the problems encountered by his own students, at secondary and tertiary level, who speak that language.

Attitudes can embrace a number of different aspects: attitude to one's aptitude, to the language and its speakers, to the teacher and one's peers and to the nature of the task itself. Regarding the latter, a number of students involved in the 1980 case study found that their attitudes to the exercise changed when they realised that there was no real pressure on them to achieve in the learning process because the emphasis lay mainly on their observations. This fact made the situation seem less authentic in terms of "real" language learning. Once the course was underway,

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however, they soon became involved in the learning process and their motivation gradually increased.

Motivation, according to Gardner and Lambert (1972), can be either instrumental (passing exams, for professional/educational purposes) or integrative (genuine interest in the target language and culture). It can also be influenced by such factors as teacher manipulation of "rewards" and "punishments", teacher versus learner expectations, incompatibility between the methodology stressed by the course itself and individual learning/cognitive style, and the relationship between motivation and "duration vs intensity" of the course. In this regard, the students in question found that their motivation tended to decrease when they realised that they were not really going to learn enough of the language to enable them to communicate with native speakers, in the short period devoted to the case study.

(b) Perception, Concept-learning, Information Processing and Retention

The learner may find perception of pattern in the TL difficult. This is especially pertinent to the case of Zulu, with its agglutinating character, vowel elision according to morpheme function and numerous inflectional categories and noun classes. In a course of 12 lessons, many of the students only began to perceive patterns at about the 9th or 10th lesson, and found it disconcerting that a vocabulary item memorised in an earlier lesson actually consisted of many morphemes, which varied with grammatical function. In this case, many of the students had to "re-memorise" the stem, and then all the various subject and object prefixes, locatives, etc., which comprised the original word. Similarly, certain concepts expressed in the TL might be strange to the learner, especially if the language is non-cognate with English, like Russian and/or Zulu. For example, in Russian, the genitive singular is used after the numerals 2,3, and 4, but the genitive plural is used after 5 and over. This might seem illogical to an English speaker as 4 seems no different from 5 in terms of plurality. In Zulu, the utterance:

cha nathi sisaphila = 'no, and we are also well'

might seem contradictory - the response is in the affirmative and yet it is preceded by a negative! It should be noted that these differences could well facilitate learning (and often did) as they are probably more salient to the learner than those structures which are more compatible with the system of his mother tongue.

Information storage and retrieval could prove difficult if the learner has no means of making valid associations. This is especially true of a situation in which the methodology used does not suit the preferred sensory modality of the learner, e.g. a "visually-oriented" student taught through the audio-lingual method with delay of the written text. Repetition of a dialogue, without any means of facilitating storage in short term memory could prove difficult.

(c) Attention

This involves concentration, incidental learning and salience. For example, what induces a learner to pay attention to certain lexical items and/or syntactic structures and ignore others? Is it the importance attached to them or the fact that they are more salient to him at the time? This leads to the idea of the "built-in syllabus" (Corder 1978) and the concept of "interlanguage".

Attention is also affected by the learner's expectations regarding the nature of the TL, e.g. as to possible negative transfer owing to "false cognates", etc. This automatically draws the learner's attention to these items, sometimes helping to eliminate error.

(d) Practice

This entails the amount and form of practice needed by the individual learner (and imposed on him by the course itself). For example, some learners may respond better to rote memorization while others may become demotivated with too much drilling.

Students involved in the 1980 case study responded more favourably to learning items in a meaningful context, which is perhaps preferable with a non-cognate language.

(e) Anxiety

This is related to achievement and may either be a general characteristic of the learner, or be caused by such factors as inhibition, attitudes towards the teacher and peers, attitudes to one's aptitude or "fear" of "punishment".

(f) Cognitive Style

This refers to whether a learner is: predominantly field independent/dependent; a deductive vs an inductive learner; a broad rather than a narrow categoriser, etc. It also concerns flexibility versus rigidity in learning style, and whether the approach used matches the

particular stylistic orientations of the learner.

(g) Learning and Communication strategies

This entails the operation of different strategies according to immediate needs, intentions, previous strategies developed (in previous language learning situations) and adoption of new strategies required by the nature of the tasks at hand and the TL. The most common are generalization (leading to overgeneralization), simplification (essentially a productive strategy), interference (either from the L1 or from previously learned languages) and transfer. Many of the students found that erstwhile strategies which they had employed in learning particular skills at the beginning of the course, such as aural comprehension and oral production, had to be changed or adapted once the printed word had been encountered. This also happened in the learning of Russian where the learner has to decode the cyrillic script first.

(h) Hypothesis-Testing

Current linguistic theory tends to regard errors as an integral part of the learning process, which is directly opposed to erstwhile behaviourist theories which claimed that errors were to be avoided at all costs. It is now generally accepted that at any time during the learning process, only those linguistic data will be relevant which are needed to test whatever particular hypothesis about underlying structure the learner is currently working on, i.e. that the learner will only pay attention to and assimilate that which is SALIENT to him at the time. This holds important implications for the teacher's treatment of error, who obviously has no access to this "hypothesis-testing" process and who therefore has to change/adapt her methods of error correction accordingly. For example, if the teacher accepts the existence of an "interlanguage", she would have to monitor each student's progress over time, in order to ascertain the nature of the error, i.e. whether it could be classified as a "presystematic, systematic or postsystematic" error (Corder: 1974).

(i) Interlanguage: Interlingual and Intralingual Errors

The students are encouraged to keep a daily record of their observations on the learning process. This should enable them to explore the concept of "interlanguage" and the variables which influence it. The notion of "interlanguage" implies a developmental process - one which is dynamic and flexible, leading to a considerable amount

of variation within each individual learner's system and among learners.

Two main types of error have been postulated as influencing the state of a learner's interim system at any point in time. These have been termed "interlingual" and "intralingual" errors respectively, the former referring to errors caused by interference from the first language of the learner, and the latter referring to errors caused byt the developmental nature of the learning process itself and the strategies employed by the learner in tackling the new system (Richard: 1974). In this respect, the value of the case study exercise lies in the opportunity which it affords the students to observe the relative influence which each error-type has on the development of his "inter-language", i.e. whether it is essentially a "recreation" or "restructuring" continuum (Corder: 1978). It is possible that the learning of a non-cognate language is a "recreation" process because the learner is practically starting "from scratch".

5.2. LINGUISTICS

This concerns the "inherent difficulty" (Ingram: 1975) of the language and previous language learning history, the influence of which can be two-fold:-

(1) influence on the expectations of the learner as to the nature of the TL on all levels (phonological, syntactic, semantic) and

(2) influence on the positive/negative transfer of linguistic items.

These variables can be analysed in terms of the effect they have on the learner's acquisition of the following areas of the TL:-

(a) Syntax

Differences between the systems of the L1 and TL, the relative difficulty of the TL syntax and the manner in which it is learned are all significant variables in the language learning process. For example syntax could be acquired in a linear sequence with the emphasis on surface structure or in meaningful units with the corresponding emphasis on deep structure and the application of transformations for communicative purposes. Obviously the methodology used in the course will also be an important contributing factor. Furthermore, the syntax of previous languages learned may affect the learner's acquisition of word order, inflectional changes such as gender, number, aspect, case endings and verb conjugations.

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(b) Semantics

This concerns the manner in which meaning is expressed in the TL and how this differs from the way it is expressed in the L1 of the learner. A further complication may arise from previously learned languages whose systems may also realise meaning differently to that of the TL. For example, isolated lexical items may express the same meaning as more complex syntactic structures in the TL, or vice versa. This is where "a posteriori" contrastive analyis may be beneficial.

Attention should be given to semantic fields and semantic correlates (cognates, communicative phrases leading to a discourse analysis, etc.) in terms of their various realizations through different linguistic systems.

A further important factor to note is the manner in which the lexis of the TL is acquired, i.e. in isolation, in context or in a list, and the relative ease or difficulty of making associations with something familiar. In terms of the latter, an interesting example arising from the Russian case study might serve to illustrate this point. The author found that lexical items from two different languages (French and Russian) which were acoustically similar and which both belonged to the same semantic fields, although carrying slightly different interpretations, facilitated positive transfer. The French word for 'wallet' = portefeuille resembles (acoustically) the Russian word for 'briefcase' = портфе́ль pronounced 'partfeel'; The fact that the notion is similar (i.e. something that contained paper) further facilitated retention by association.

(c) Phonology

The acquisition of the sound system of the TL can be affected by the L1 of the learner and/or previously learned languages in terms of

(a) positive transfer, where the phonemes of the TL have already been encountered in other languages, or

(b) negative transfer, where similar but not corresponding phonemes have been encountered e.g. in Zulu, the "k" sound differs in the following words:

kunjani Khumalo = [g]ungani [k]umalo = 'How are you, Khumalo'?

In this example, the lenis or softly-voiced [g] is often a problem for English speakers because the orthographic system represents it as [k], in contrast with "hard" [g], written "g", and with aspirated [k^h], written "kh".

A final factor concerning the phonological system and which also involves the cultural aspect, is the possible resistance of the learner to the "strange" sounds of the TL. Intellectually, he may be able to accept them, but emotionally he may not be able to do so.

5.3 SOCIOCULTURAL

This entails such factors as:

(a) Empathy, sympathy or antipathy for the language, its speakers and their culture, which includes the notions of stereotyping and egocentricity.

(b) Integrative motivation in terms of adopting an alter persona or resistance to this.

(c) Home vs school backgrounds as a help or hindrance to learning, which involves parental/peer support/indifference.

(d) The learning of different language domains/registers of the TL, which also relates to learner needs.

5.4 PEDAGOGICAL

This area can be subdivided into two aspects:

(1) transfer of training and

(2) language learning/language teaching (LL/LT) context, which includes approach, methodology and techniques.

5.4.1 Transfer of training

Previous language learning history and the methods used definitely influence subsequent language learning. This includes "formal" versus "informal" language learning situations, which might lead to positive "transfer" in the following ways:

- adoption of previous strategies used in learning a previous language in an informal situation. These are most likely to be communicative strategies triggered off by communication activities in the current

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language learning situation.

- adoption of previous strategies used in a "formal" language learning situation. This is more likely to take the form of formal rule learning, rote memorization and other learning strategies.

5.4.2 LL/LT Context

This includes the approach adopted by the course in question, the methodology arising from the approach and/or employed by the language teacher, course organization and the acquisition of skills.

(a) Approach

This should be analysed in terms of the influence it has on the following variables:-

- The learning styles of individual learners. An approach which emphasises an "inductive" method of learning/teaching might not suit a learner who prefers a more "deductive" approach.
- The preferred sensory modality of the learner. An approach which relies predominantly on the auditory sense modality could easily frustrate a learner who is more "visually-oriented".
- Approaches used in previous language learning situations. If these differ markedly from the current approach being used, the learner may take time to adjust to the new method owing to its unfamiliarity and the fairly "novel" demands it might make on him. This also relates to the use of new strategies to meet the exigencies of the new situation, all of which might contribute towards a general "slowing down" of the rate of learning, compared to previous language learning experiences.

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(b) Methodology

Allwright (1976) proposes the following model of the language learning/teaching process which is a useful tool for analysis. The following components of the model thus lend themselves to analysis for the effect they have on either facilitating or impeding the learning process:

i) Samples of the TL. This concerns the nature (spoken/written) and source of the samples to which the learner is exposed, i.e. teacher/s, peers, native speakers, audio-visual aids, textbooks and materials.

ii) Guidance concerning the nature of the TL. Three basic types are distinguished:

- G1 rules - explicit verbal formulations of the characteristics of the TL (e.g. the rule for forming the passive). These do not necessarily come only from the teacher.
- G2 cues - hints that draw the attention of the learner to features of the TL, such as the use of underlining on the blackboard.
- G3 knowledge of results - feedback which informs the learner of the success or failure of his attempts, and from which he may make inferences about the nature of the TL. Knowledge of results may come from the teacher, peers or materials.

iii) Management activities which are normally designed for the express purpose of controlling the learner's exposure to samples of the TL and to the forms of guidance deemed most appropriate by the teacher. These include techniques such as the use of translation, audio-visual aids, contrastive analysis, etc. and the planning of various forms of practice such as drills, conversations, dialogues and role-play situations. It also includes the planning and

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manipulation of group/peer interaction and the nature and amount of activities designed for it. For example, certain activities could foster a competitive atmosphere which may not suit all learners. In this case, activities which engender a more mutually supportive atmosphere might be preferable.

A few examples, drawn from the author's learning of Russian and from the 1980 case study in which her students were learning Zulu, should serve to illustrate the ways in which "management activities" could hinder the learning process. Both case studies entailed the learning of a non-cognate language by means of the audio-lingual method. In both cases, the students concerned preferred learning through the visual modality and thus found it difficult to repeat dialogues to which they had been exposed only through the auditory mode. They felt that they were asked to reproduce the dialogues too soon, without sufficient practice with understanding. In both cases, questions on the dialogue were put to the students after only one repetition. Related to this was the frustration experienced by the students at not being able to remember words/structures that had recently been encountered owing to the lack of anything familiar with which to associate them. In this case, plenty of repetition and the use of items in a meaningful context were needed. For example, items presented in "semantic clusters" were easier to recall, as a particular item pertaining to a specific situation would prompt others, e.g. ordering food in a restaurant.

Another example concerns the way in which "student responses" were managed by the teacher. In both cases, students were encouraged to make "spontaneous utterances" not entirely based on the text, but still confined to "situationally-appropriate" reactions which were "empty" responses to certain stimuli chosen by the teacher and not the learners. Thus the learners "intentions" were not taken into account and the

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ensuing exchanges could hardly have been called "authentic" in a communicative sense.

A final example concerns the provision of English translations of the dialogues for all the courses in question. Students found that it facilitated understanding initially but that when, in the case of Russian, it was withdrawn after the first five lessons, totally different learning strategies came into play. In this case, the author found that she had to infer the rules herself through a succession of hypotheses and that retention was greatly improved because of this. Over-reliance on the translations reduced the opportunity for "risk-taking" behaviour, trial-and-error learning and, consequently, valuable feedback.

(c) Course organization

This refers to the way the course is planned in terms of its duration versus its intensity, which can affect motivation to lear and perseverance in learning. For example, a course which is spread out over two years but which is relatively low in intensity might not be conducive to productive learning whereas a short, intensive course might prove to be far more effective. Related to this is the time lapse between lessons and the time of day at which lessons take place. In this regard, the Zulu course in the 1980 case study was poorly organised owing to teacher availability and the fact of having to fit it into the normal timetable as lectures were not suspended during the case study period. The lessons were thus spread over 8 weeks with 5 hours contact time per week. Furthermore, lessons took place on Mondays and Tuesdays at 4.00 p.m. hence leaving little time for consolidation between lessons, and too much of a gap before

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the following week.

(d) Acquisition of Skills

- Aural/Oral Different approaches and methodologies might emphasise certain skills over others and differ in their order of presentation of the various skills. Previous language learning history including erstwhile methodologies to which the learner has been exposed might either facilitate or impede the learner's acquisition of skills. For example, with reference to the aural/oral skills, learners who have previously been taught by a "grammar-translation" method might experience difficulty when asked to rely purely on aural comprehension at the beginning of the language learning process. However, once the learner has encountered the written text, he may gradually become more and more reliant on it, at the expense of making the initial attempt to comprehend the material aurally, especially if he is allowed to follow a taped dialogue in the text book.

- Reading and Writing The acquisition of these skills may take longer if: (1) the orthographic system of the TL is entirely novel to the learner, e.g. a cyrillic script, or (2) the orthographic system of the TL contains symbols which are similar to those in the learner's L1, but which are realised differently in the phonological system of the TL. In both cases, the learner is likely to experience difficulty with sound-symbol association, and hence, with retention of items.

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PART B - THE 1980 CASE STUDY

1. Student Profile

The students who took part in this case study were teacher trainers and in-service teachers who were reading for their B.A.(Hons) degree in Applied Linguistics at the University of the Witwatersrand. There were 15 students in toto, from mixed language backgrounds, hence the reason for providing two language courses i.e. Zulu and French. As the whole point of the exercise was for students to be exposed to learning a non-cognate language, those who were English or Afrikaans mother tongue speakers were required to learn Zulu, and those who spoke an African language, to learn French. However, these were "sophisticated" language learners in that most of them spoke at least two languages, and the African students spoke reasonably fluent English which is cognate with French, so that the exercise was not as "novel" for them as it was for the Zulu learners.

2. Organization

The language courses are designed to be intensive, ideally running for 7 - 10 weeks with teacher-student contact at 10 hours per week with a further 2 hours of language laboratory work (self-instruction) and 4/5 hours of study. In this way it is hoped that an optimum ratio between the duration versus the intensity of the course will be achieved. Strevens (1977: 29) proposes an upper limit of between 18 and 20 hours per week and a lower limit of 5 hours per week, for learning to be effective. Unfortunately, the intensity of instruction for the case study in question neared the lower limit owing to administrative constraints. The language courses were thus run for 8 weeks with teacher-student

contact at 5 hours per week. Furthermore, students had to continue reading for their normal lectures which were not suspended during this period.

3. Courses Offered

3.1. Zulu

The course used was "ZULU FOR BEGINNERS" developed as a joint effort in 1977 by the Centre for Continuing Education, the Department of African Languages and the Language Laboratory Division at the University of the Witwatersrand. Its main focus is on adult education. The whole course consists of three parts, each part consisting of 12 lessons. The students in question covered the first part only.

3.2. French

The course used was "BASIC CONVERSATIONAL FRENCH" by J Harris and A Lévêque (6th Edition), published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Students covered twelve conversational units and five grammatical units.

4. Course Content

The units for both courses are arranged according to functions, notions and topics such as greetings, asking directions, seeking personal information, the weather and seasons, etc. However, a significant difference between the French and Zulu courses is that the former contains specific grammatical units which are interspersed among the conversation units, whereas the latter presents grammar in the form of "Grammatical Notes" in an appendix for the students' or teachers' reference. This affected methodology in the case study in question (see 4 below).

The phonological component for both courses includes the basic phonemes and patterns of intonation and rhythm in connected speech; the lexical component covers between 300-600 words, depending on the language being taught; the syntactic component covers basic regular structural patterns, regular verb forms and a few irregular forms when necessary, concord, modifiers, pronouns, prepositions and inflectional categories. It is expected that students achieve a basic "threshold level" in terms of aural/oral and reading/writing skills. Aural/oral skills include comprehension of taped and natural dialogues (with peers, teacher and native speakers) and dictation, and production involving appropriate intonation and rhythm and situationally-appropriate reactions. Reading skills include comprehension with multiple choice and "rearrangement" exercises and reading aloud. Writing includes production of sentences according to a model, recombination, decomposition and recomposition. Some "free" writing was encouraged in the French course but not in the Zulu, as students in this course advanced more slowly than their "French" peers. It should perhaps be noted at this point that although both languages were non-cognate with the first language of the learners, they differed in terms of their status in this country. French could definitely be considered a "foreign" language whereas Zulu is rather more difficult to classify. In terms of sheer numbers of Zulu speakers in this country leading to a greater availability of native speakers for Zulu learners, it could be considered a "second" language. In certain respects, this made a difference to the motivation of the learners concerned as, although the primary motivation for learning was "instrumental" in that it was a course requirement with a very specific purpose, the Zulu learners showed a far greater "integrative" orientation because of the abundance of native speakers with whom to converse.

5. Methodology

The methodological orientation of both courses is audio-lingual, with emphasis on encouraging correct pronunciation and intonation, and on learning structures through situations. However, grammatical explanations are also encouraged, although this aspect is not an inherent part of the Zulu course, as it is of the French. This fact, coupled with the teacher variable in terms of erstwhile training and preference for a particular approach, affected the learning process, especially in the case of Zulu. Students were not provided with grammatical explanations and thus had to rely on a purely inductive method of learning, until, out of frustration, they asked the teacher to provide them with some rules. This request was granted but only rather late in the course, with the result that students felt that it had slowed down the learning process quite considerably.

Both courses carried English translations of the dialogues and tapes of structure drills for use in the language laboratory. In addition, some form of homework was given each week.

Finally both sets of students wrote a mid-course and post-course achievement test.

PART C - CONCLUSIONS

1. Student reactions

1.1 Course organization

1.1.1 As the case study was designed with the express purpose of affording the students insights into the nature of the language learning process, it was thus regarded as more of an intellectual exercise, rather than one in which the students were learning the language for its own sake. For this reason, the handout which was given to the students during their orientation session explicitly

1.1.1 stated that the case study was not a test of language learning ability, in order to reduce any anxiety which students might have experienced owing to added pressure from other course components. This, however, was seen as a demotivating factor by some of the students as they felt that the whole exercise became less authentic in terms of any "real" language learning. This point will be taken up again under (2.1.1) below.

1.1.2 It has already been noted in this paper that a noticeable limitation of the 1980 case study was the inability to achieve an optimum "duration versus intensity" ratio. This did indeed lead to decreased motivation on the part of the students, who found that they were too tired to approach the language learning experience with real enthusiasm and that, owing to the large "gap" between lessons on the Zulu course, they tended to forget material already learned and thus wasted a lot of time in revising previous lessons before any new material could be introduced. This, in part, accounted for the rather slower pace of learning for the students on the Zulu course as compared to those who were learning French.

1.1.3 Related to this was the fact that the students still had to cope with their normal lecture load in addition to the case study. This, of course, required a great deal of reading and the students found that, when under pressure, the first component to suffer would be the case study, especially since their achievement in the language was considered to be less essential than the quality of the report itself. What the students had failed to realise at that point was that lack of achievement in learning the language owing to lack of interest

1.1.3 and effort, was very different from inability to achieve through other factors arising from the nature of the language course itself, such as incompatibility between the approach and methodology used and the particular learning styles and preferred strategies of individual learners. The latter case would have at least provided some input of substance to the final report (and did, in a number of cases) whereas the former would not.

1.1.4 Neither of the teachers for the 1980 case study were native speakers of the language they were teaching, although they were both very experienced and skilled teachers. For this reason they were regarded positively by the students although they might have had greater credibility had they been native speakers, especially with regard to the provision of cultural information concerning the target language group.

1.2 Insights gained from the case study exercise

By the end of the courses, most of the students felt that they had gained greater insights into the nature of the language learning/teaching process. This was certainly evident from the fairly high quality of the reports which were submitted. A few of the more revealing insights are listed below.

1.2.1 Most of the students had underestimated the influence of peer pressure on the learning process. Negative reactions from certain students influenced the whole class, including the teacher, who lost some of her enthusiasm. This, in turn, was noticed by the students, which only served to compound the problem. However, the converse also applied. A number of students were very highly

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1.2.1 motivated to learn and this put pressure on their peers to achieve, as they did not wish to appear "inadequate".

1.2.2 Owing to the educational and professional standing of the students involved in the case study, the teachers tended to have high expectations as to their language learning ability and potential achievement. Consequently they tended to proceed at rather a fast pace in the initial stages which caused some anxiety and frustration on the part of the students, who did not wish to fall short of the teachers' expectations or appear "inadequate" in front of their peers.

1.2.3 Most of the students preferred the visual sense modality for learning. This was not compatible with the approach being used, which required them to rely on the auditory sense modality in the initial stages.

1.2.4 The withholding of grammatical explanation in the initial stages of the Zulu course only led to frustration for the students who desired a more deductive approach. In this case, the methodology employed did not cater for the students' needs.

1.2.5 Certain activities, such as songs and games, generally aided retention of lexical items and structures and served to relieve the pressure felt by the students, especially at the end of the day.

1.2.6 The audiolingual method tends to be "teacher-centred" with students being very dependent on the teacher in the initial stages of learning. Probably owing to the nature of the learners in question, this was resented, as they wished for greater autonomy for their own learning. This has implications for most language learning situations in that teachers could

1.2.6 show greater flexibility in the way they structure their courses.

2. Alterations to future courses

The next case study exercise is scheduled for July/August 1982. On the basis of staff and student feedback on the 1980 case study, the following changes have been incorporated into the programme:

2.1 Course organization

2.1.1 Owing to the negative reaction of some of the students to the statement in the pre-course handout to the effect that the case study should not be seen primarily as a test in language learning ability (see 1.1 above), this has been omitted from the handout. Students should believe that their achievement in the language is important.

2.1.2 The 1982 case study will be free of the administrative constraints which marked the 1980 case study. It will therefore run for 7 weeks, with teacher-student contact at 10 hours per week (2 hours per day). Lessons will take place in the morning, which will then allow students more time for individual study and language laboratory sessions. In addition, normal lectures will be suspended during this period.

2.1.3 The implication inherent in (2.1.2) above, is that the case study should have a more central role in the Honours course, owing to the amount of time devoted to it and the fact that other activities will cease during that period in order to allow students to give greater attention to it. This is not inconsistent with the aims of the Honours course, which are to afford students greater insight into the nature of second/foreign language learning and teaching.

2.2 Language learning/teaching context

2.2.1 Zulu or Russian will be taught in 1982, but this time the .../24

2.2.1 teacher will be a native speaker of the TL. This should have greater credibility with the students, especially with regard to providing additional cultural insights into the TL and its speakers.

2.2.2 The methodology to be employed in the 1982 case study will allow for greater adaptation to learners' individual learning styles and preferred sense modalities. Learners will thus be introduced to the written text from the first lesson. However, they will still be afforded practice in relying purely on their auditory sense modality in a number of activities as this is a valuable and necessary exercise. Furthermore, grammatical explanation will form an integral part of the course.

2.2.3 Students will be allowed to participate far more in the planning of language activities and exercises. This has the express purpose of fostering the learners' autonomy for their own learning.

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